

**Collaboration and Communication – Building Dialogue and Discussion into
Standards Based Lessons**

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21ST CENTURY SKILLS

- COLLABORATION
- COMMUNICATION
- CRITICAL THINKING
- CREATIVE THINKING



THE DIGITAL AGE'S EFFECT ON STUDENTS' BRAINS

Modern life seduces students into distraction and the frittering away of their time. Their lives are immersed in speed; anything slow to them is torture. Lingering over any topic/book/etc. is a dying art. When students' brains are moving so fast is hard to go deep into any subject.

The volume of information in our society is asking students' brains to process more data than at any other time in history. Much of this data sends trivial messages to the brain and students are not being taught how to select what is important. Their brains are not searching out information, but instead, are sorting it out. We forget that human energy is finite. Students are feeling a lack of control and anxiety because of the massive amounts of stimuli bombarding the brain.

The central modern paradox is that students are disconnecting interpersonally while strongly bonding to data. This is the most dangerous aspect of modern life for students. A feeling of connectedness is the most important part of belonging to life. Fundamentally, we are social beings, but the brain is hard wired for face-to-face communication. Technology allows students to communicate from a distance.

This continuous partial attention caused by over-exposure to technology tends to lead students to become impulsive and to shorten their attention spans. It is creating a new phenomenon called "attention deficit trait." These students exhibit the characteristics of a student diagnosed with ADD, but do not have the chemical imbalances in the brain that define the condition. They lack the ability to make decisions, prioritize or plan.

A good way to think about the performance/behavior of these students is to consider that they have racecar brains with bicycle brakes. We need to learn what the braking system is for these students.

Edward M. Hallowell, MD, psychiatrist, founder of the Hallowell Center is New York and Boston

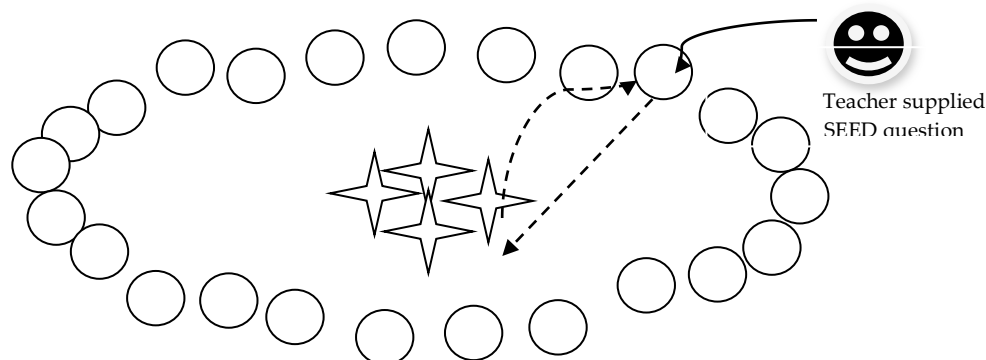
STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES THAT INCORPORATE DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE

Controlled Think-Pair-Share - Class is divided into partner groups. The most verbal of the two is designated Person A and the other becomes Person B. Present the content and/or question to be discussed. Person A talks for one minute (shorter for primary students), discussing the content/question. Person B only listens and cannot speak during the minute. At the end of a minute, Person B will respond and talk for a minute, using one of the following response starters: "I really liked what you said about..." or "What you said reminds me of..." or "Another way to look at this is..." or "Here's what I heard you say...". The two partners will then be given another minute in which both of them can talk to clarify and bring closure to the conversation.

Roving Exchanges. This is a good way to stimulate movement in the room and to help those quiet students engage in dialogue. Divide the class into groups of four when possible. Several groups of three are more desirable than a group of five. The teacher asks an open-ended question related to the unit's content. Students then discuss a response, with a facilitator making sure that everyone shares at least one idea and listens to what was discussed within the group. Students are told that someone in each group will have to summarize the discussion. As modeled in the session, a student from each group is picked to travel to a new group to share the summarization. The new group then compares/contrasts their previous discussion with what they just heard summarized from another group. In the math classroom, this activity can be adapted to solving word problems. Each group gets a different word problem, based on the unit of study, and the student who moves must verbally explain to the new group how the previous group solved the problem.

KIVA Discussion Format (a.k.a Fish Bowl Conversation)

Students sit in a large circle, with four chairs placed in the middle of the circle so that they form a square. Students in these chairs are seated so that they face each other. The teacher has prepared key “seed” discussion questions (based upon the current unit of study) and written them on index cards or pieces of paper. Four students are selected to leave the large circle and sit in the center chairs. One of these students is given a question card to read aloud and the four students in the center begin discussing. When a student in the outer circle wants to add to the discussion, he/she enters the center, taps one of the four on the shoulder, and takes that student's place. The teacher hands new questions as needed to students in the outer circle, who then enter and read the new question.



Further Considerations:

- The class can be told how many questions will make up the day's Kiva discussion so that each student will know to take at least one turn in the middle before time runs out.
- Extremely reluctant talkers can simply be given the question to read.
- Students are given a certain number of chips and must drop one in a bucket in the center each time they enter. (This would allow the teacher to see how many verbal vs. reluctant speakers there are.) This technique might be employed so that very verbal students don't monopolize the discussion.
- Younger grades should be asked simpler questions. (e.g. Kindergarten: "What words can you think of that start with the 'b' sound?" Or place a stuffed animal in the center and ask "What words describe this bear? What kinds of things could he do if he were real?" ... VS... Fifth grade: "In what ways does Maniac Magee act more like an adult than a kid his own age?"

Ways to Adapt the KIVA Format:

- Add a fifth chair that remains empty initially (so that a student who is tapped is not necessarily obliged to leave at that moment).
- Assign “roles” to each chair. Example: the listener/summarizer/“restater”; the questioner; the humorist; the devil’s advocate; the notetaker; real-life example provider; the author/expert POV; the critic POV; Multiple Intelligence roles; etc.
- Assign roles to key chairs in the outer ring—particularly to facilitate discussion once the activity is completed.
- Use synectic (forced relationship) questions as seed questions.
- Try a lightning round version of KIVA: how long will it take for every student to contribute at least once?
- Vary the seed questions so that all levels of Blooms’/Marzano’s thinking skills are addressed. Be sure to include the 5 Ws and the H!
- Invite an expert in to permanently occupy the 5th chair.

Take a Stand. Students move to place themselves on a value line that shows the position they take on a given issue raised by the content. Students who feel strongly about the issue on either side will line up at opposite ends of the value line, while those with moderated feelings line up in between. To engage students in productive discussion, split the line in half and have students slide down to determine a partner. This will be modeled during the session. Partners then discuss two issues. They first explain to each other why they took the position that they did in the value line. Next, they find one area concerning the topic under discussion on which they can reach consensus.

Tell Me More. Tell Me More is a straightforward activity that is designed to get partners thinking together as they begin to elaborate on a very simple idea. Once complete, the results of their work can be shared with the class as a whole to compare and contrast other partners’ efforts. The teacher begins by grouping students in pairs. A sentence is displayed on the board that is related to the subject at hand. The sentence should be incredibly simple, having only a subject and a predicate. For example, in a Social Studies classroom, the teacher might write, “George Washington was a President.” With the sentence on display, the teacher directs the

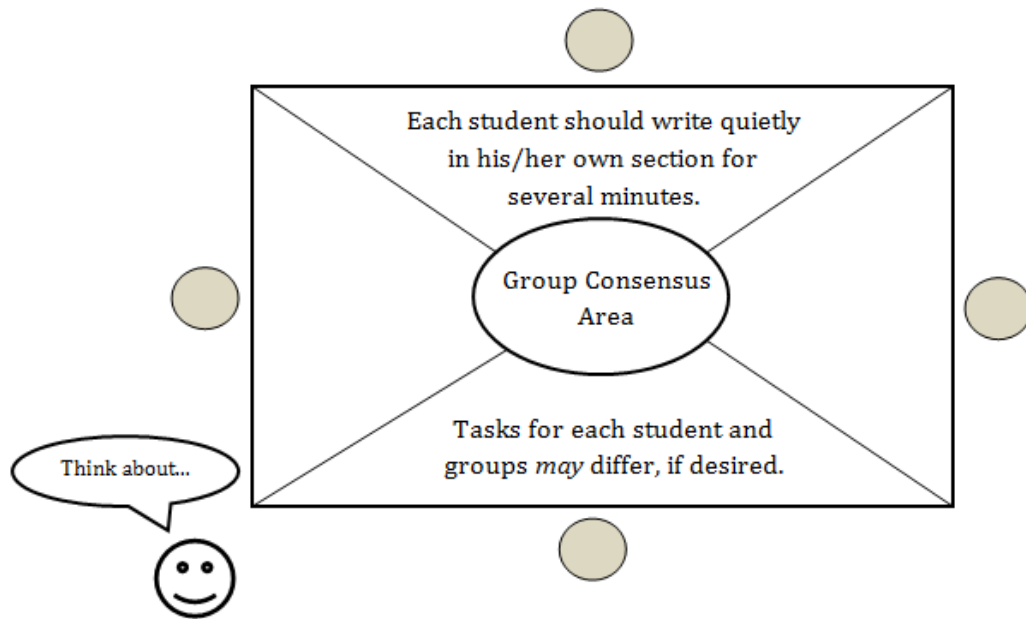
students to elaborate on this sentence so that it shows a deeper understanding of the content at hand. Initially, this will be a challenge in itself as students struggle to consider what they know about the content, so direct modeling might be helpful. To that end, march the students through the uses of the 5 Ws and the H to assist with the task: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Tell Me More!

Write the original sentence here:					
Who	What	When	Where	Why	How
Write your new, improved sentence here:					

Sharing Board. The sharing board activity is a wonderful activity to try right at the start of the school year—or any time for that matter. It allows students the chance to work in groups, each with his/her own task. In this way, it is a low-pressure method to get students working and thinking together. Furthermore, from a teacher’s point of view, it has the benefit of being an activity that works quite well in a heterogeneous or mixed ability classroom. It can be used to help students think about, record, and share their knowledge and ideas. Although the sharing board is a fine stand-alone activity, once complete, the results of the sharing board can be used later to further whole class discussion. Since the students have actually written their ideas, the teacher also has a record of student knowledge. Although there are *many* ways to adapt the sharing board, here is how to use it in its simplest manner:

Begin by dividing the class into groups of four or five. Decide on a question, concept, or a problem for the class to consider and distribute chart paper to each group. Make sure that the size of the sheet is large enough to allow each member access to the paper. Ask the students to divide the paper into sections of equal area, one section per member. Leave a circle, square or oval in the middle for later recording of group consensus.



Once everyone is ready, tell the students that they are to think about and then silently write down what they know/think/question about the class concept under study in the area on the sheet allotted for them. Once the assigned time has elapsed, the teacher should call time and then ask the students in the group to consider each other's material. They should discuss what was written and then agree upon a response that they will share with the rest of the class. This agreed response can be recorded in the center section.